

Bill would give Vermont greater resources to perform oversight of federal recovery funds

A bill sponsored by Rep. Peter Welch that would provide state and local governments with greater resources to prevent waste, fraud and abuse of federal stimulus dollars was approved Wednesday afternoon by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

The Enhanced Oversight of State and Local Economic Recovery Act, H.R. 2182, ensures that officials responsible for monitoring and accounting for the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act have the tools they need to perform their oversight responsibilities efficiently. The bill allows state and local governments to set aside a portion of allocated stimulus funds for auditing, contracting and grant planning and management.

"The federal response to the ongoing economic crisis demands an unprecedented level of scrutiny and accountability. The American people must be confident that we are taking every precaution to prevent waste, fraud and abuse," Welch said. "This bill gives state authorities like Vermont Auditor Tom Salmon the resources they need to perform the oversight taxpayers expect."

Vermont State Auditor of Accounts Tom Salmon said H.R. 2182 would increase his ability to conduct audits and detect fraud.

"State and local government officials have expressed concern that significant costs will be involved in meeting ARRA's transparency and accountability requirements," Salmon said. "My office believes H.R. 2182 deals with this unaddressed concern and will give state and local governments the leeway to use stimulus funds to assist with defraying these costs."

Welch has been calling for increased oversight of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act since it passed into law this February. In early March, Welch was successful in requesting that the Oversight and Government Reform Committee "conduct vigorous oversight of the distribution of taxpayer dollars" relating to the ARRA.